

communicate to the kiosk via remote communication, such as a modem or the InterNet. The term catalog should be understood to be not limited to a physical paper catalog, but also encompasses things such as CD-ROMs, and other data storage devices. In this embodiment, it would be required that there be a unique bar code for each catalog to identify the supplier of the particular item. This identifying code could be on the front cover, the back cover, or somewhere within the catalog.

In an alternative embodiment of the present invention, each particular merchant would assist in updating the information in computer 26 such that the computer keeps an accurate list of desired gifts for each particular registrant. This may be done in a number of ways. In one embodiment, the merchant would be in remote communication with the computer of kiosk 200 via modem 37. As the prospective purchaser buys a gift, the merchant would request the list of gifts generated by the gift registry system from the prospective purchaser. This list of gifts would have on it a bar code that represents a unique identification code for the particular registrant. The merchant would then scan in the identification code, and then scan in the goods being purchased. The list of goods for this particular registrant would then be updated accordingly in computer 26.

In another embodiment, similar to that just discussed, a merchant would simply ask for the gift list from the prospective purchaser as the merchant is ringing up the sale. The merchant would then manually mark which items and how many items were purchased on the list. At the end of the day, all of the merchants associated with the multi-merchant registry would deposit them with a system operator or in a slot 302 as seen in FIG. 11. The system operator would then update the lists of desired gifts for the registrants. It should be noted that these are only two examples of how computer 26 may be updated and many other methods of updating computer 26 may be utilized without departing from the spirit or scope of the present invention.

It is understood that equivalents are possible within the spirit of the present invention and that changes made from the present disclosure, to the full extent extended by the general meaning of the terms in which the appended claims are expressed, are understood to be within the principle of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A multi-merchant gift registry comprising:

- a gift registry kiosk disposed proximate the stores of a plurality of merchants in a shopping area, each of said merchants participating in the gift registry, the gift registry kiosk having;
  - a first data entry system through which first information and inquiries about registrants in the gift registry are entered into the computer system, the first information for each registrant including at least one name for the registrant;
  - a second data entry system capable of receiving second information, the second information including a list of potential gifts which the registrant has identified and a unique identifier associated with the particular merchant having each of the desired gifts;
  - a database storage system that stores and retrieves the first and second information about the registrant and the unique identifier associated with the particular merchant having each of the desired gifts; and
  - a display system that displays the list of potential gifts for a particular registrant and information about the particular merchants the desired gifts are from, including

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the unique identifier associated with the particular merchant having each of the desired gifts in response to an inquiry from a prospective purchaser.

2. The gift registry as in claim 1 wherein the first data entry system is a touch screen system.

3. The gift registry as in claim 1 wherein the second data entry system comprises a transfer device electrically connected to the computer system and a portable device.

4. The gift registry as in claim 3 wherein the portable device is a hand held scanning device.

5. The gift registry as in claim 4 wherein the transfer device is a docking station for the portable hand held scanning device.

6. The gift registry as in claim 1 wherein the second data entry system identifies each participating merchant by a unique identifier.

7. The gift registry as in claim 6 wherein the unique identifier is in the form of a digitally encoded value embodied in a bar code.

8. The gift registry as in claim 1 further comprising updating means for updating the database storage system as a prospective purchaser buys a gift from the list of potential gifts for a particular registrant.

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a2 ✓ 9. A system for registering items selected by a registrant from a plurality of participating merchants for subsequent communication to a prospective purchaser, the system comprising:

a gift registry kiosk disposed proximate the stores of a plurality of merchants in a shopping area, each of said merchants participating in the gift registry, the gift registry kiosk having a computer system containing identifying information about a registrant, the information for each registrant including at least one name for the registrant and a list of potential gifts which the registrant has identified;

a portable input and storage device for use by the registrant with a plurality of participating merchants, the input and storage device being capable of receiving and storing information regarding the registrant's desired gifts including the merchant each desired gift is from, wherein the input and storage device stores a unique identifier for the particular merchant each desired gift is from;

a transfer device connected to the computer system that receives the information regarding the registrant's desired gifts from the portable input and storage device and transfers the information to the computer system; and

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a prospective purchaser interface device that allows a prospective purchaser to view a list of the goods desired by the registrant wherein the list includes information about the particular merchant each gift is from.

10. The gift registry as in claim 9 wherein the portable device is a hand held scanning device.

11. The gift registry as in claim 9 wherein the unique identifier is in the form of a digitally encoded value embodied in a bar code.

12. The gift registry as in claim 9 further comprising updating means for updating the database storage system as a prospective purchaser buys a gift from the list of potential gifts for a particular registrant.

13. A method of operating a gift registry system capable of registering items selected by a registrant from a plurality of participating merchants in a shopping area as possible gifts for the registrant for subsequent communication to a prospective purchaser for possible purchase as gifts for the registrant, the system having a computer system, a portable input and storage device, a transfer device and a prospective purchaser interface device, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving identifying information about a registrant at the computer system;

using the portable input and storage device to select desired gifts from a plurality of participating merchants;

using the portable input and storage device to enter a unique identifier for each participating merchant, such that each gift chosen by the registrant will be identified as being from a certain merchant;

transferring the information received and stored by the portable input and storage device into the computer system via the transfer device; and

interfacing with a prospective purchaser such that the prospective purchaser can view a list of the gifts desired by the registrant and the particular merchants the gifts are from.

14. The method as in claim 13 further including the step of updating the information stored in the computer system to reflect gifts that have been purchased for a particular registrant.

APP A3 \* \* \* \* \*

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